

The Changing Face of Utah



Most of you weren't there, but in 1950 Utah's population and economic composition was a lot different than in 2000.

We're talking about 1950. Only about 15 percent of you were even alive. In 1950, the very first baby-boomers were only 4 years old.

The Then and Now of Population in Utah

Do you think Utah's population was the same then as now? Obviously there was much growth (Utah still has the highest birth rate and lowest median average age in the nation). Utah's population in

1950 was about 700,000. In 2000 that number had risen to 2.25 million, a three-fold increase. Let's take a look at the "then and now" on where people live in the state.

Seven counties have maintained their "share" of total population, within a 0.1 percent difference in population between 1950 and 2000. Most surprising is the largest, Salt Lake County (40.1 percent then and 40.2 percent now). The rest were small and included Daggett (0.1 percent of total Utah population); Grand (0.3 percent); Iron (1.4 percent); Kane (0.3 percent); Morgan (0.4 percent); and Rich (0.2 percent).

Counties that have significantly increased their population over the 50 years (that's an increase in population, not the rate of increase) were Salt Lake, up by 624,000 (from 279,000 in 1950) and Utah County with about 290,000 more persons over the 1950 count of 83,000.

Two counties have actually lost population between 1950 and 2000. Carbon County dropped some 4,400 persons, down from 24,800 and Piute County fell by about 460 residents, down from 1,900 in 1950.

By far the fastest-growing county in Utah, compared to 1950, was—yep, you guessed it—Washington County. Population has increased over nine-fold from the 9,800 in 1950 to 91,100 in 2000. (See the text box for more population facts.)

Utah Population is Still Concentrated in the Metro Counties

In 1950 about two-thirds of all Utahns dwelt in the four counties within a 50-mile north/south corridor of Salt Lake City. Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, and Utah counties were where the action was. By 2000, these counties increased their share to over 75 percent. That's three-fourths of all people in the Beehive State. Interesting to note is that Salt Lake County's relative share of total population in 2000 stayed within one-tenth of one percent of the 1950 share of total population. That's 40.1 percent in 1950 and 40.2 percent in 2004. Both Davis and Utah counties grew significantly. Weber grew more slowly, actually losing its 12-percent share of population (1950), dropping to 9 percent in 2000.

Then and Now – A Perspective on Utah (1950 and 2000)

Jobs in the Industries of the Beehive State – Then and Now

Business has changed a lot over the last 50 years in Utah. The post-WWII era, with the ending of hostilities and return home of cash-laden GIs, spawned the Baby Boomer Generation. The Boomers, and their parents created the pent-up demand for consumer goods and services. The Utah economy during that time was heavily influenced by the natural resource and government-based sectors in the economy. The manufacturing sector, including that portion processing copper and uranium, was an industry leader.

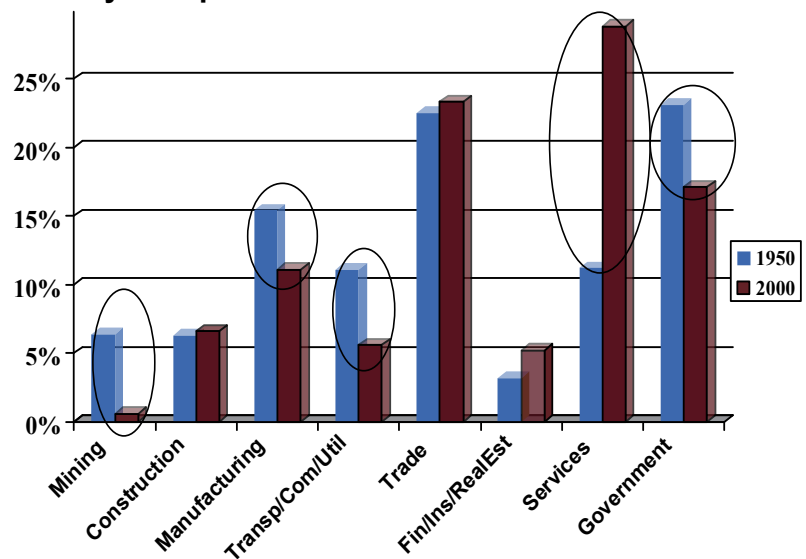
Things have changed. Industrial diversification and the surge from the goods-producing to service-producing and information economy evolved. This change has fostered diversity that, to some extent, insulated Utah from the vagaries of the economic recessions that affected other regions in the country, specifically the Rust Belt states in the Midwest and Northeast. During the last half of the 20th century Utah's industry makeup has evolved to a configuration that is much more like the nation.

Jobs in Utah's Industries, Then and Now (see graph)

Mining employment has lost its share of total jobs. In 1950, about 6.5 percent of all nonfarm jobs were in mining. By 2000, that share shriveled to 0.7 percent. Why? Two things happened to the economy during that 50-year period. First, other industries grew a lot faster than mining, thus reducing mining's share of total jobs. The loss of demand in the uranium market didn't help either. Second, technological improvements automated the mining industry. Re-tooling for economic efficiency and environmental compliance cost Utah thousands of jobs – both in the copper and coal mining industries. The result was fewer jobs but significant increases in productivity and output.



Industry Composition of Utah Jobs – Then and Now



Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services, Workforce Information, Nov 2005

Population Highlights of Counties in Utah 1950 - 2000

Largest Counties

2000	1950
Salt Lake 903,000	Salt Lake 279,000
Utah 372,000	Weber 85,000
Davis 240,000	Utah 83,000
Weber 198,000	Davis 31,000

Smallest

2000	1950
Daggett 1,000	Daggett 400
Piute 1,400	Rich 1,700
Rich 1,900	Piute & Grand 1,900

Metro (Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, Utah) Percentage of State Total

1950 69%
2000 76%

Most Growth

1950-2000
Salt Lake 624,000
Utah 289,000
Davis 209,000
Weber 113,000

Least Growth

1950-2000
Carbon - 4,400
Piute - 460
Rich 260
Wayne 320

Fastest Growing (percent)

Washington 930%
Davis 770%
Grand 449%
Summit 449%
Utah 448%

Manufacturing employment, as a percent of total jobs, slipped by 3 percent over the half century. The loss of these jobs impacted the average wage in the state.

Transportation, communication, and utilities lost half its share of jobs by 2000, at the same time we experienced significant population growth requiring these services. This industry actually tripled its employment, but the pace was still far below the rate of growth in other industries.

The largest impact, not only in the percent of total jobs, but in the sheer size was in the services industry sector. Its share more than doubled, from 11 percent to 29 percent of all jobs. Employment in services in 1950 was 21,000. By 2000 that count soared to 310,000 jobs.

Government was “bigger” in relative terms in 1950 than in 2000. At mid-century 23 percent of all jobs were in the government (federal, state, and local) sector. That percentage in 2000 had declined to 17 percent. This is significant because over the same time period population tripled. That’s an increase of over 1.5 million people.

Construction, trade, and finance industries all increased their shares of total jobs, but only by about one percentage point.

Utah’s employment or industry “mix” now resembles that of the nation. This is a positive shift because it is a more diverse economic structure which is not wholly reliant on just one or two industry sectors to fuel the state’s economic engine. Diversity is good, as it helps moderate economic bad times. ⓘ

More? Go to:

<http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/gotoPopulation.do>

<http://governor.utah.gov/dea/HistoricalData.html>